

The first recollection I have after my bicycle car accident which happened on 17th St. an Montana Ave. in Black Eagle MT, on August 9th 1982 and left my body in a comatose state for 3 month's / 90 day's, at the Deconis Medical Center in Great Falls, MT was "what did I do now".

Picture this; it was a dark room and the only light was coming from a window which over looked a parking lot that was practically bear: I did not know if I was being kidnapped or in a prison cell; all I knew was it was dark and I was alone.

And this is exactly what not funding the Resource Facilitation Service would do to the entire new brain injured survivor's who don't have anywhere to go, anyone to talk with who can relate to what their body is going through and not have anyone to listen to them.

In following awakenings, I re-learned my name and where I lived and who my family was and as they say; with every brain injury, there are differences. When my bicycle impacted with that car that hot summers day, I was only 12 years old so my body hadn't started puberty change when the boy becomes a man. In effect I could and did regain much more then an older survivor of a brain injury. This was one of the reasons along with my strong family bond and the faith that I hold in the Lord Jesus Christ were the things that helped me the most through that trying time. That is why it is so vitally important that we do not lose the Resource Facilitation Service to those survivors who do not have these attributes.

When people who are looking for direction to find out why they are doing wrongly or why their body hasn't finished healing the Resource Facilitation Service will be able to send them in the right direction. The most common complaint that survivors of closed brain injuries have is loud noises. Imagine coming home from abroad and you are frustrated from the loud noises that they are hearing and the fear is that our military might be experiencing something similar to this and if we lose our Resource Facilitation Service then our returning personnel will not have a place to go. With the crucial role that the Resource Facilitation Service plays not only in the lives of the brain injured but in the lives of their families it is very needed to cushion the re-entry back into society much less a burden.

Divorce rates among survivors are so astronomically high because people do not know the problem. The first step to solving a problem is to identify it. With people coming home from abroad, this probability is high leading to other problems down the road such as alcoholism or drug abuse.

After I relearned my name and where I lived and my family, I was told I had a brain injury, it was known; I had shown all the classic signs of a traumatic brain injury, but there is so much of the human brain that we are still learning about and will never know because of the over all complexity of the brain and the fact that everyone is different. Everybodies lives interact with different environments, cultures, attitudes, and feelings - at different stages in life - so every brain injury is different. However we can all find common ground, and it is in this common ground where we find healing.

Madam Chair and distinguished members of the committee, my name is Mark Sanders and I am from Great Falls, Mt. I am on the Board of Directors of the Brain Injury Association. And I'm here today to speak to you of the vital need we have for the Resource Facilitation Service and the sizeable loss we would have if you do not fund this valuable service.

Montana has the second highest rate of brain injuries, after Wyoming. What the Resource Facilitation Service does is direct the new brain injured survivors where they can go for services. About two weeks after they are released from the hospital, the Resource Facilitation Service calls survivors and gives them information about brain injury and offers to help them. RFS can listen and relate to what they are going through; and offers help and support to them.

There was no Resource Facilitation Service back in 1982 when my accident occurred. I had to figure things out by myself. For instance; when I came out of my coma, the feeling of love from my family was there, my sister worked in the hospital as a dietician, and my mother and father and other family would periodically visit; but the people who I chose to be my friends were never around. When I was released from the hospital some of my friends would sometimes show up at my house, but they would go and be with my brother. Pretty soon, that stopped too. This overpowering feeling of isolation came over me after the first half of the year I returned to school; I noticed that nobody was coming to my house, I was always going to theirs; I received no calls from my friends, I was always calling them. They had all found new friends who they would be with, and when I would ask, they would say "I had changed". If I had the RFS to reassure and direct me to a place where people were experiencing the same hurtful treatment as me I do believe my psychological well-being would not be as damaged as it is.

Currently we have one part-time worker and there is too much work for her. The RFS is growing all the time. And so we are asking that you fund the Resource Facilitation Service.

RFS helps people make the best of a very difficult time.

Thank you for hearing me.



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